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ABSTRACT

Most educational reform initiatives of the past 20 years are geared towards ensuring that the United States dominates the emerging global economy. What is lost in this rush to the top of the materialist heap is an education for the more enduring human values: creativity, intellectual development, care, social justice, and democracy. In this book, a 30-year teacher of social studies and German describes his efforts to teach for these higher human values in a traditional rural Maine high school. A discussion on discipline reveals his efforts to empower students to think independently and challenge authority, yet maintain enough decorum in his classroom to keep from being fired. He describes the dilemma of teaching to the test versus co-creating, with his students, a curriculum of genuine relevance. He deconstructs such phrases as individualized education plans, total quality management, and high standards for all, and systematically demonstrates how they mask the corporate agenda for schools and society, which aims to foster winners and losers, haves and have-nots, and is itself a source of the kind of alienation that breeds violence. By drawing upon the theories of progressive educators and his own experience, Solmitz generates a number of principles that teachers, administrators, school board members, and parents should heed if they hope to recapture the democratic imperative that has been the unrealized potential of America's educational system. (Contains 116 references.) (TD)

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